



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release September 14, 1988

Bruce Batten 907/786-3486

FIRST PUBLIC HEARING ON ALASKA LAND
EXCHANGES SCHEDULED FOR WASHINGTON, D.C.

The first in a series of public hearings on the proposed exchange of limited oil and gas interests on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain for nearly 900,000 acres of refuge system inholdings in Alaska will be held by the U.S. Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C., on September 20, 1988.

The Washington hearing, to be held at 9 a.m. at the Main Interior Building auditorium at 18th and C Streets, N.W. . A similar hearing will be held in Anchorage October 5. Hearings are scheduled for six other Alaska communities through the end of September.

Under discussion is an Interior Department proposal to trade oil and gas interests on approximately 166,000 acres within the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain to several Alaska Native Corporations in return for inholdings of land they own within seven National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska. The proposed exchange was announced in the August 31 Federal Register and also is explained in greater detail in a draft legislative environmental impact statement, "Acquisition of Inholdings in Alaska National

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Wildlife Refuges," copies of which are available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Anchorage regional office and which can also be obtained at the September 20 public hearing.

In addition to written and oral testimony that will be accepted at the hearing, written comments can be submitted through October 24 to the Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.

The Interior Department has recommended an oil and gas leasing program for 1.5 million acres of the 19-million-acre wildlife refuge in northeastern Alaska. Before any land exchange could take place, however, congressional authorization of both the leasing program and the land transfers would be necessary.